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Laugh. Live. Learn.

04.05.2012 | Students, Hot Topics, Campus and Community, Culture and Society

The family of the late humorist Erma Bombeck chose a hardy hoopsi blue spruce to plant this spring near her Ohio historical marker outside St. Mary Hall on the University of Dayton's campus. "They planted trees and crabgrass came up," the plaque will read.

What better tribute to a delightfully funny writer whose newspaper columns chronicling suburban family life hung on refrigerator doors everywhere for decades? Approximately 350 writers from around the country and University of Dayton students are expected to attend a short tree dedication and blessing ceremony at 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 21, with the Bombeck family as part of the 2012 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop.

The workshop, envisioned as a one-time event when it was launched in 2000, is now offered every other year at the University of Dayton, where Erma graduated in 1949. The 2012 workshop sold out in eight days.

This year's workshop will kick off with a keynote talk from comedy writer Alan Zweibel, an original *Saturday Night Live* writer and author of the 2006 Thurber Prize-winning novel *The Other Shulman*. He helped to create the character of Roseanne Roseannadanna played by Gilda Radner on *Saturday Night Live*. Earlier this year, Zweibel and humorist Dave Barry published *Lunatics*, a funny novel described as "a masterpiece of inspiration and mayhem."

Other keynote speakers include Adriana Trigiani, who will introduce her newest novel, *The Shoemaker's Wife*, at Books & Co. at The Greene at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 19. She's also written the critically acclaimed bestseller *Big Stone Gap* and been a writer/producer on *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World*.

Pulitzer Prize winner Connie Schultz, a nationally syndicated columnist for Creators Syndicate and a regular essayist for *Parade* magazine has graciously stepped in to give a keynote address after Jeff Zaslow, *Wall Street Journal* columnist and best-selling author of *The Last Lecture*, died in a car accident in February. A moment of silence will be observed during the workshop for Zaslow and his family.

Authors Gina Barreca and Ilene Beckerman round out the keynote speakers. Barreca is a professor of English at the University of Connecticut, author of *It's Not That I'm Bitter: How I Learned to Stop Worrying About Visible Panty Lines and Conquered the World* and has appeared on *20/20*, *The Today Show*, *CNN*, *Joy Behar*, *Dr. Phil* and *Oprah* to discuss gender, power, politics, popular culture and humor. Beckerman's book, *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, was the inspiration for an off-Broadway play.

The workshop's faculty features more than two dozen professional humor and human interest writers. The atmosphere is very

supportive to both new and established writers looking for the kind of inspiration Erma received from University of Dayton professor Brother Tom Price, S.M., who told her “You can write!”

The Bombeck workshop is the only one in the country devoted to both humor and human interest writing. Through the workshop, the University of Dayton and the Bombeck family honor one of America’s most celebrated storytellers and humorists. Over the past decade, the workshop has attracted such household names as Dave Barry, Phil Donahue, Art Buchwald, Nancy Cartwright, Don Novello, Garrison Keillor and Gail Collins. In 2010, Mo Rocca and a crew from *CBS Sunday Morning With Charles Osgood* visited the workshop and conducted interviews for a Mother’s Day tribute to Erma.

The Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop is co-sponsored by the University of Dayton’s National Alumni Association, the University of Dayton’s College of Arts and Sciences, National Society of Newspaper Columnists, Greyden Press, Dayton Marriott Hotel and the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment. Follow the workshop on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ermabombeck and Twitter at twitter.com/ebww.

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